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Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child
Seventy-first session

Summary record of the 2076th (Chamber A) meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 19 January 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Aldoseri

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Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Second periodic report of Zimbabwe

This record is subject to correction.

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Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Second periodic report of Zimbabwe (CRC/C/ZWE/2; CRC/C/ZWE/Q/2 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the Zimbabwean delegation took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe), noting that the State party's second periodic report covered the period 1996-2009 and referring to the State party's reply to the list of issues raised by the Committee, said that the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission had been established under section 242 of the 2013 Constitution. The Commission had taken over the human rights mandate of the Office of the Public Protector, formerly known as the Office of the Ombudsman. Commissioners were appointed by the President from a list submitted by the Parliamentary Standing Rules and Orders Committee.

3. The Government had been conducting capacity-building workshops on the Convention for professionals and communities working with children and awareness-raising programmes with various communities. Activities were, however, still quite fragmented and suffered from inadequate coordination. The Government had therefore produced a draft child rights policy aimed at improving coordination of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of international and regional conventions on children's rights. Part of the process involved aligning various pieces of legislation with the Constitution. Some 400 acts of Parliament had been identified for that purpose. About 300 of those had been dealt with under the General Laws Amendment Bill, which was still before Parliament. The Government was committed to ensuring that the process was completed within a reasonable time.

4. Section 81, paragraph 1, of the Constitution defined a child as a boy or girl under the age of 18 years; previously, there had been conflicting definitions. Under the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, the death penalty was not imposed on any person who had been under the age of 21 years at the time that the offence concerned had been committed. Under the Termination of Pregnancy Act, it was forbidden to terminate a pregnancy, except where the pregnancy endangered the health of the mother or in the case of rape or incest. Where children considered that their freedom of thought, conscience or religion was violated, they could, under the Children's Act, make a complaint direct to the authorities.

5. The Constitution guaranteed the right of every child who was a citizen of Zimbabwe by birth — where either parent was a citizen — to the prompt provision of a birth certificate, under the new computerized procedure. On attaining the age of 16 years, a child was issued with a national identity card.

6. The Social Welfare Assistance Act made provision for parents facing difficulty in carrying out their responsibilities by enabling them to apply for State assistance. It was a cause for concern that, according to the Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey of 2010-2011, more than one quarter of children were not living with either parent. In the case of adopted children, periodic reviews were conducted during the first five years of adoption in order to assess whether the child had adapted to his or her new environment.

7. Children under 5 years of age were exempt from user fees in the health service. Particular efforts were made to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Malnutrition and malaria were still major problems. The national malaria control programme, with support from various partners, was implementing a range of

interventions, as a result of which the malaria incidence rate had fallen. It was regrettable that the proportion of births attended by skilled personnel was only 66 per cent.

8. The Constitution provided that children must be given free basic education. Zimbabwe had made significant progress towards eradicating illiteracy. In 2005, the government had adopted a policy to introduce early childhood development classes at every primary school. The dropout rate from primary and secondary school in 2013 amounted to 9 per cent.

9. The Government had special protection measures in place for children in situations of emergency, such as refugees, displaced children and children in conflict with the law. It had incorporated the provisions of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, to which it adhered strictly. There were currently no displaced children in Zimbabwe.

10. Children below the age of 7 years were deemed to lack criminal capacity. A child between the ages of 7 and 14 years was presumed to lack capacity to form the intention to commit a crime. The Government was, however, considering raising the age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 12 years, in line with the Convention. Children below the age of 2 years whose mothers had been convicted and incarcerated accompanied their mothers to prison. A total of 33 such children were currently with their mothers in prison.

11. The use of dangerous drugs or dealing in them was an offence, but no child had been arrested for drug trafficking during the period under review. As for sexual exploitation and abuse, the National Baseline Survey on Life Experiences of Adolescents, conducted in 2011, had revealed that 9 per cent of females and 2 per cent of males between the ages of 13 and 17 years had suffered sexual violence in the previous 12 months.

12. Despite the current economic setbacks, the Government remained committed to supporting and promoting children's rights and welfare. He appealed to the Committee to have regard to the situation of Zimbabwe. The enormity of the country's task should not be underestimated. The Government was, however, open to constructive suggestions.

13. **Ms. Sandberg** (Coordinator, Country Task Force), after congratulating the delegation on the adoption of the 2013 Constitution, asked what stage had been reached in the process of harmonizing the Children's Act with the Constitution. The Committee was not convinced that Zimbabwe had a comprehensive structure for implementing and monitoring the Convention; it was difficult to understand how the various bodies involved related to each other. She wondered when the Child Rights Policy would be submitted to the Cabinet and subsequently adopted. She also asked about the governance and structure of the National Programme of Action for Children, how it would enhance the coordination of activities under the Convention, and how the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children tied in with other relevant plans and policies.

14. Noting that between 2012 and 2015 the budget for children's programmes had been cut by as much as 90 per cent, particularly for maternal and child health and for children in difficult circumstances, she asked for a further explanation and for the delegation's views on the prospects of an increase in the budget.

15. The Constitution contained a strong section on corruption, and in its replies to the list of issues the State party had acknowledged that there had been prosecutions in that connection, but the fact was that Zimbabwe was 156th out of 174 countries on the

Global Corruption Report of Transparency International and she wondered whether more resources would be made available for anti-corruption operations.

16. The State party had said that the best interests of the child were paramount, and she would welcome information on whether the laws of Zimbabwe reflected that approach. It appeared that the criteria for determining the best interests of the child were fluid, being left up to the decisions of individual judges. Yet, in a situation where parents were given long prison sentences, for example, she wished to know how the child's interests were protected and whether judges and other relevant officials were given any training in that regard.

17. The Committee was concerned that corporal punishment remained legal and common in the home, at school and in prisons. The Constitution prohibited violence, but corporal punishment was expressly permitted under many laws. Was there any hope that the practice would be totally prohibited? She wondered how it could be ended, and how awareness could be raised of the damaging effect of using violence against children. Parents and teachers often seemed to know no other way of disciplining children, and she asked whether alternative approaches could be promoted.

18. It was a matter of deep concern that sexual abuse was prevalent and, in particular, that one quarter of the victims were children aged less than 5 years. Various measures had been adopted, but she wondered how effective they had been. The problem might be simply a failure to implement the existing legal framework. In that connection, she would be grateful for further information on the Action Plan to End Rape and Sexual Violence and on whether any assessment of the Plan had been carried out. She asked how the Government sought to deal with the problem of the sexual harassment of girls by male teachers and pupils in schools.

19. The Committee was concerned that the Customary Marriages Act did not specify the minimum age of marriage but was used to promote certain cultural practices. Noting that the marriage age for boys was 18 years as against 16 years for girls, which was contrary to the Constitution, she asked whether the marriageable age for girls would be raised and whether the relevant provision would be included in the Customary Marriages Act. In practice, girls could marry under the age of 16 years; indeed, in the Apostolic Church, girls as young as 10 years old were married. The African Union Campaign to End Child Marriages in Africa sounded promising, and she would welcome further information. Lastly, she asked what action the State party proposed to take on such practices as polygamy, bride price, virginity testing and witch hunting, which were all prevalent.

20. **Mr. Guráň** (Country Task Force) said that he would appreciate further details on the structure and functioning of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission and on the steps taken to ensure its compliance with the Paris Principles, including with regard to the appointment of members. He would also welcome information on the composition of the Thematic Group on Child Rights, on the nature of the complaints that it had handled and on efforts to raise awareness of the Group among children.

21. He wished to know whether the Committee's general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard had been translated into the State party's official languages and whether campaigns had been organized to raise awareness of the document among stakeholders, particularly children. It would also be useful to know what measures had been taken to disseminate the Convention among judges, prosecutors and police officers. Noting that some funding for capacity-building workshops was provided by foreign partners, many of whom had decided to reduce their contributions, he asked what assurances could be given about the provision of adequate training in the future.

22. The delegation should explain why the Government had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe and why similar agreements had not been reached with other faith-based organizations. It should also describe efforts to increase the impact of the National Youth Council in schools and to gather comprehensive data disaggregated by a range of variables on the situation of children in the State party.

23. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know what measures had been adopted to prevent discrimination against vulnerable groups of children. In particular, the delegation should state whether the father of a child born out of wedlock had any guardianship rights, whether the father's name was recorded on the child's birth certificate and, if not, what consequences that had with regard to inheritance. The delegation should also comment on the use of flogging as a form of punishment for male juvenile offenders and on the lack of public facilities accessible to children with disabilities.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.15 a.m.

24. **Ms. Msika** (Zimbabwe) said that steps were being taken to harmonize almost 300 domestic laws, including the Children's Act, with the Constitution and that the matter was at the top of the Government's agenda.

25. **Ms. Sibiya** (Zimbabwe) said that the process of aligning the Children's Act with the Constitution was well under way. The Government had held broad consultations with stakeholders, whose input had been used to shape the principles underpinning the revised Act. Children had been consulted separately from adults to ensure that they did not feel intimidated.

26. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that the aim of the draft Child Rights Policy was to strengthen coordination between the Government and its partners within the framework of the National Programme of Action for Children. Bodies tasked with implementation of the Programme would be established at provincial level, to encourage the active participation of all stakeholders. The Policy made provision for the creation of standing and ad hoc committees to address children's issues. The draft had been submitted to the Cabinet and would be considered in due course.

27. **Ms. Musiwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children complemented and fed into the National Programme of Action for Children, through which the Government implemented, monitored and evaluated measures to protect children's rights.

28. **Ms. Manyanya** (Zimbabwe) said that government spending on child policies and programmes had fallen, mainly because of the country's declining economic performance, exacerbated by the imposition of sanctions and a reduction in the support received from international development partners. It had been necessary to make budget cuts across the board, but spending on children had not been disproportionately affected.

29. **Ms. Sandberg** said that she was aware of the challenges posed by the State party's economic situation. Nevertheless, she wished to know whether and how the Government was attempting to safeguard budgets for the provision of services to children.

30. **Ms. Manyanya** (Zimbabwe) said that, in the allocation of resources, priority was given to children's issues, particularly in the areas of education, health and social welfare.

31. **Ms. Msika** (Zimbabwe) said that the best interests of the child were taken into account in all matters of family law, including with regard to maintenance, custody,

guardianship and access, and notably in the Matrimonial Causes Act and the Guardianship of Minors Act.

32. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked whether it was possible to challenge or reverse a judgement passed without due consideration for the best interests of the child.

33. **Ms. Msika** (Zimbabwe) said that all judges were familiarized with international conventions during their training and were aware of their duty to respect the principle of the best interests of the child. There had not been any recorded cases in which they had failed to do so, but if they did, the children concerned would be entitled to lodge an appeal. The best interests of the child were also borne in mind during the sentencing of parents. Probation officers were tasked with investigating the specific aspects of each case and with submitting recommendations to judges.

34. **Ms. Manyanya** (Zimbabwe) said that the Government was committed to tackling corruption and, to that end, had set up the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission.

35. **Ms. Mufukare** (Zimbabwe), in reply to a question on corporal punishment, drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 47 to 50 of the replies to the list of issues and said that, in schools, the practice was regulated by Statutory Instrument No. 362 of 1998, which would not be aligned with the Constitution until contested provisions of the latter that prohibited corporal punishment had been reviewed by the Constitutional Court. There had been instances in which unauthorized persons had administered corporal punishment in violation of the regulations. In that connection, disciplinary action had been taken against 15 teachers in 2012 and 36 in 2014. The increase could be attributed to greater awareness of the issue among children and parents. The Government's current focus was on ensuring adherence to the regulations in place and on encouraging other forms of positive discipline. Children could report suspected violations of their rights to guidance and counselling committees in schools, to the police, to NGOs and to a number of government and community-based bodies.

36. **Ms. Sandberg** said that she wished to know whether the State party intended to amend legislation that allowed for the use of corporal punishment and whether that practice was explicitly prohibited in schools. Noting that most parents in Zimbabwe considered corporal punishment to be the only adequate form of discipline for children, she requested information on awareness campaigns relating to alternative disciplinary measures. The Government should lead the way in changing attitudes in that regard.

37. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that he would be interested to know whether the use of corporal punishment was regulated in schools.

38. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the issue of corporal punishment was being discussed actively in society and that many parents believed that the practice should be abolished.

39. **Ms. Mufukare** (Zimbabwe) reiterated that the use of corporal punishment in schools was regulated by Statutory Instrument No. 362. Corporal punishment should be applied as a measure of last resort, could not be inflicted on girls, should only be carried out by the head of the school before a witness and should be recorded in a log book.

40. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that alternative disciplinary measures were being discussed, including counselling and the setting of written assignments. The delegation would appreciate suggestions from the Committee in that regard.

41. **Ms. Musiwa** (Zimbabwe) said that all Government ministries were responsible for raising awareness about the comprehensive State support system for child victims

of sexual abuse. It was important that cases of abuse were promptly reported, in order to minimize risks to the health of the victims and ensure that children were removed from dangerous situations as quickly as possible. A culture of silence surrounded the issue of child sexual abuse in some parts of the country because, in cases where the abuser was the family's principal breadwinner, reporting him to the police could lead to a loss of income. However, the benefits of reporting were being highlighted in awareness campaigns and by childcare case workers and focal points trained in children's rights.

42. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that 90 per cent of community childcare workers had been trained in children's rights. They were involved in Family Clubs, where parents could discuss alternative discipline and measures to protect children from ill-treatment in the home.

43. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the practice of *lobola* was not quite the same as bride price but rather aimed to establish ties between the families of the bride and groom. It was considered completely acceptable by society.

44. **Ms. Musiwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the proportion of women marrying under the age of 15 years had decreased from 5.8 per cent to 2.4 per cent in the previous 30 years, but the issue remained an area of concern. Programmes were in place to raise awareness of the negative impact of child marriage among the most affected groups of the population, including apostolic sects. In that regard, memorandums of understanding had been drawn up not only with the Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe but also with many other religious groups. Following the Bishops Dialogue on Child Marriage, the Government would be holding capacity-building workshops for apostolic ambassadors for children's rights. In addition, the Government had been addressing the issue of early marriage by working to alleviate poverty and prevent school dropout. The Girl/Young Women Empowerment Framework included campaigns against harmful religious and cultural beliefs, and the "18+" campaign had raised awareness among traditional leaders about laws prohibiting early marriage and the risks associated with that practice.

45. **The Chair**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether the statistics provided related to marriage under the age of 15 or 18 years.

46. **Ms. Musiwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the statistics, taken from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, concerned marriage under the age of 15 years.

47. **The Chair**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that she would welcome statistics relating to marriage under the age of 18 years.

48. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she wished to know whether virginity testing was compulsory and at what age it was carried out. She asked what happened to the girl in question if it was established that she was not a virgin and emphasized the negative impact that could have on the girl's mental health.

49. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that the proportion of women admitting to having been married under the age of 18 years had been 31.8 per cent in 2009 and 32.8 per cent in 2014.

50. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns had emphasized the importance of delaying sexual activity until the age of 18 years, and virginity testing had been proposed as a measure to verify that children were practising abstinence. However, the practice had not been pursued and was never carried out in formal settings.

51. **Ms. Msika** (Zimbabwe) said that the Thematic Group on Child Rights under the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission was not yet operational, but the Commission as

a whole could receive complaints from children. The Commission was an independent body that complied with the Paris Principles, and Commissioners received training in children's rights.

52. **Mr. Guráň** said that it would be interesting to know whether the Commission had received any complaints from children and how those complaints had been handled. He also asked whether the State party intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

53. **Ms. Sandberg** said that, as she understood it, the Commission had not yet been accredited by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions (ICC) as being in compliance with the Paris Principles.

54. **Ms. Msika** (Zimbabwe) said that there were no data available relating to complaints to the Commission made specifically by children. The Commission had applied for ICC accreditation and already complied fully with the Paris Principles. The ratification of the Optional Protocol would be discussed and an update provided at a later date.

55. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that the decline in donor support for children's programmes was due to an overall decline in resources. However, Zimbabwe received more support than many other countries, owing to the well documented success of its programmes, and the Ministry of Finance was looking at ways in which to maintain the progress achieved. While most data were disaggregated, they were currently held in separate ministerial databases, and measures were being taken to establish a centralized system.

56. **Ms. Charumbira** (Zimbabwe) said that Junior Councils gave young people throughout Zimbabwe a platform to share knowledge and experience and articulate their views on issues concerning them. The majority of members were aged between 16 and 18 years. Junior Councillors were actively involved in the budgeting processes of 14 local authorities, which enabled them to secure funding for their activities. Other youth forums included the National Junior Councils Association and annual conferences during which the Government emphasized the importance of children's involvement in decision-making processes. Local authorities were encouraged to increase children's participation in the development and implementation of child-friendly economic and social policies.

57. **Ms. Jiri** (Zimbabwe) said that the Marriage Act and the Customary Marriages Act would be revised in order to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years, in line with the Constitution.

58. **Mr. Muchemenye** (Zimbabwe) said that children born out of wedlock were placed in the sole custody of the mother. The mother of the child held all the rights associated with guardianship and, consequently, only she could consent to having the details of the child's father included on the birth certificate.

59. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that, according to statistics available, there seemed to be a delay between the registration of a child's birth and the issuance of the birth certificate. What exactly was the time frame for those two processes? The delegation should comment on whether it was in a child's best interests not to have his or her father's name on the birth certificate, what steps were being taken to ensure that birth certificates were issued for all children, particularly those in rural areas, whether awareness-raising programmes on the importance of birth certificates had been launched, and what was being done to provide stateless children born in Zimbabwe with citizenship.

60. **Mr. Muchemenye** (Zimbabwe) said that, as the law stood, a man was protected from being assigned a child whose paternity he had not acknowledged. Birth

registration took place at a decentralized level in order to ensure that the service was easily accessible, particularly to those in rural areas, and mobile registration services were also available. Media campaigns had been launched to raise awareness of the importance of birth registration.

61. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that births of children in health-care institutions could be registered and certificates issued within 24 hours. The disparity between the numbers of children whose birth was registered and of birth certificates issued was due to the fact that parents sometimes chose to delay obtaining a birth certificate until they enrolled their child in school, for which the certificate was compulsory.

62. **Ms. Jiri** (Zimbabwe) said, in response to Ms. Muhamad Shariff, that in cases of inheritance the Constitution prohibited discrimination against all children, including those born out of wedlock.

63. **Mr. Muchemenye** (Zimbabwe) said that by law a child must be registered within six weeks of his or her birth. Abandoned children whose births were not registered were the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. Such children were ensured a place of safety, their birth was registered, and they were granted nationality in the event of statelessness.

64. **Ms. Sibiya** (Zimbabwe) said that law enforcement officials received training in sign language in order to help children with disabilities who had suffered sexual abuse to report the crime. The Government was working with civil society organizations and international development partners in that regard, and awareness-raising campaigns had been launched to popularize the use of sign language among law enforcement bodies and other State departments dealing directly with children.

65. **Mr. Gurán** said that he wished to know whether families in which children lived solely with their grandparents, as was the case in 20 per cent of Zimbabwean households, received financial support. The delegation should comment on whether statistics were available on children living in care institutions, how such institutions were monitored, whether complaint mechanisms were in place for the children, and whether the institutions operated publicly or privately. He asked whether the Government was supporting alternative family care arrangements, whether programmes had been developed to train foster parents, whether foster parents received financial support, and whether Zimbabwe intended to ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

66. **Ms. Sandberg** said that she would appreciate a comment on why children were prohibited from marching in celebration of Universal Children's Day, and on reports stating that children were forced to participate in political activities. In view of the fact that information on children accused of committing crimes or child victims of crime was published by the media, she asked what measures were taken to protect their right to privacy.

67. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, primary education must be free for all students. However, neither primary nor secondary education was free in Zimbabwe owing to hidden costs, such as books and uniforms, and the recent introduction of examination fees. Besides the implementation of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme, which was underfunded, how else was the Government tackling the issue? Moreover, the number of teachers had fallen in recent years, as had their working hours because of their need to supplement low incomes. She enquired what steps the Government was taking to improve the situation, how the Government intended to broaden investment in school infrastructure, particularly in rural satellite schools, whether private schools were regulated or monitored, and what measures had been introduced to prohibit schools from being used for political and

military purposes. Lastly, she asked what had been done to ensure that early childhood care was provided by qualified professionals.

68. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** said that the majority of disabilities among children in Zimbabwe were preventable. She was concerned that the Constitution referred only to discrimination based on physical and not mental disability. The delegation should explain what services and medical support were available to children with disabilities, how early diagnosis of disabilities was being promoted, whether the position of childcare coordinator within the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare had been filled, and whether measures had been taken to employ more midwives and doctors. Infant mortality rates in Zimbabwe were high on account of significant gaps in the treatment of HIV/AIDS and the large number of preventable illnesses that children contracted. She would welcome information on policies and plans to address infant mortality and asked how the Government intended to improve access to health-care services in rural areas, whether there were plans to waive fees for child health care, how much money within the State budget was allocated to health-care services, whether the Government had adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes, and whether measures had been taken to encourage members of the Apostolic Church to seek and accept conventional health-care services.

69. It would be helpful to have more information on the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy, including its effectiveness. In that connection, she asked whether adolescents could access such services on a confidential basis, particularly in cases of sexual abuse, whether the consent of parents was required and whether adolescents received information on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. The delegation should comment on the fact that, under the Termination of Pregnancy Act, lengthy enquiries into cases of alleged rape could result in adolescent girls risking their lives by seeking terminations through unofficial channels. She would appreciate more details of the measures taken to tackle child poverty, and of how the Government was addressing the violation of children's rights following "Operation Murambatsvina".

70. Although comprehensive laws on juvenile justice were in place, their implementation was lacking. Law enforcement officers seemed not to be aware of the law, and limited assistance was available from the Directorate of Legal Aid. She wished to know whether an assessment had been made of the National Legal Assistance for Children Strategy, what the Government was doing to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years, whether a comprehensive Juvenile Justice Bill had been drafted, whether complaint mechanisms had been established for children in detention, and whether alternative measures to the deprivation of liberty were being implemented. She asked why life imprisonment for children was not prohibited by law, what measures were being taken to prevent impunity for crimes against children, and whether the Pretrial Diversion Programme was still in place.

71. She was concerned by the high rate of child labour, despite its prohibition by law, as well as by the number of internally displaced persons whose rights were often violated during the resettlement process. The delegation should indicate whether the Government intended to compensate for loss of property and to improve access to basic infrastructure in such cases, what policies were in place to address the migration of unaccompanied children, and what support was available to those who were exposed to physical and sexual abuse on their journeys.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 19 January 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Mezmur

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives

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Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives (CRC/C/MDV/4-5, CRC/C/MDV/Q/4-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Maldives took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives), introducing the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives, said that significant progress had been made since the Committee had considered the country's last report. Maldives had achieved five of the eight Millennium Development Goals several years ahead of the deadline; infant and maternal mortality rates had dropped significantly; vaccine-preventable diseases including polio and diphtheria were non-existent; HIV/AIDS infection rates were low; and malaria was under control. Moreover, the literacy rate had increased from 70 per cent in 1977 to 98 per cent in 2015.

3. Nonetheless, his Government was not complacent. Real challenges persisted and the country maintained an unwavering commitment to the rights of children. The legal framework for its actions in that regard was the 2008 Constitution, which promoted the welfare of children and provided guarantees of non-discrimination, equality and protection against abuse. The Government was also working on an ambitious legislative programme to strengthen legal safeguards for children, including the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill, which would replace the existing Act on the Protection of the Rights of Children and make the Convention an integral part of national law. Other proposed new legislation included the Juvenile Justice Bill, which would make national policy consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4. Recent laws such as the Domestic Violence Act, the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse Act and the Sexual Offences Act also helped protect children and other vulnerable groups, and Maldives had acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. A nationwide toll-free children's helpline existed to report cases of abuse, and a register of child sex offenders had been published. The Act on the Protection of the Rights of Children had already been amended to guarantee universal access to free primary and secondary education, an entitlement actively promoted by President Abdul Gayoom as part of his "No Child Left Behind" policy. Thanks to those measures, the country had achieved near universal school enrolment, including gender parity, at both primary and secondary level.

5. The inclusive education policy had greatly enhanced access to education for children with disabilities. Fifty-four special-needs units had been set up in mainstream schools across the country and it was envisaged that at least one teacher trained to attend to children with special needs would be available in every school by the end of 2016. Early intervention centres had been established in Male and three more atolls to provide diagnosis, education and care for children with disabilities. Maldives had established universal health insurance and continued to invest in improving health services. Immunization coverage was around 99 per cent and the available evidence suggested that child nutrition had improved.

6. Maldives maintained a policy of moderation and openness but it was not immune to the global threat of terrorism and had recently passed the Anti-Terrorism Act. The country's society, history and tradition were intimately linked to Islam, which formed the basis of the Constitution and laws. Calls to introduce values and practices contrary to the tenets of Islam would not be accepted by the people of Maldives.

7. A safe home for children who needed to be separated from their families to prevent further abuse had been set up in Male in 2005, and a further four such homes had been established on different atolls in 2014. A new children's home in Hulhumale was due to open in February 2016. The State sought to find foster families for children in its care. Fostering was currently approved by a foster care panel and monitored by the Ministry of Law and Gender, but the regulations in that regard would be amended by the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill.

8. For the forthcoming 15 years, child protection policies would be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, which the Government intended to pursue relentlessly. However, daunting challenges remained, such as the immense economic cost of implementing the systemic changes envisioned in the 2008 Constitution, and the time and effort required to transform those changes into societal norms as the young democratic system replaced traditional power structures.

9. **The Chair**, speaking as Country Rapporteur, said that Maldives was to be commended for passing new legislation and allocating increased resources to child protection, as well as for signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. He asked if there were any plans to proceed with the ratification of the Protocol and requested information on the outcome of the feasibility studies on the withdrawal of reservations to articles 14 and 21 of the Convention. He was pleased to see that certain critical pieces of legislation were before parliament but drew attention to concerns regarding the first draft of the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill in such areas as shared parenting, premature removal of children from birth families and inter-agency coordination. He asked how the Juvenile Justice Bill would be synchronized with the Criminal Code.

10. He wished to know how Maldives intended to establish a stable, legislatively mandated and properly resourced body to coordinate the efforts of government departments with those of other stakeholders in implementing and promoting the Convention. He asked the delegation to provide further information on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan and on any mechanisms in place to track and assess child-specific expenditure. According to information available to the Committee, the allocation of resources to government departments with responsibility for children's issues had diminished until 2010 and then increased after 2012.

11. In light of the fact that Maldives admitted certain exceptions to its definition of a child, he wondered what measures were taken to ensure that all persons under the age of 18 were adequately protected in accordance with the ideals enshrined in the Convention.

12. **Mr. Nelson** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee was well aware that collecting accurate data was a costly process, but it was of paramount importance for conducting studies into children's rights issues. He commended Maldives on its Child Protection Database, established in 2010 with the assistance of UNICEF, and asked whether it was also accessible to agencies working with children. Were there any plans or budget allocations to improve the database or to set up other databases to support it, including a national children's database?

13. Since most of the complaints handled by the Human Rights Commission of Maldives appeared to relate to violations against children, he wondered whether the Government had given any consideration to appointing a children's ombudsman to sit on the Commission, as was done in other countries. The Committee was aware that the Supreme Court of Maldives had issued a ruling against the Commission after the latter had submitted a critical report to the Human Rights Council as part of the second universal periodic review of Maldives. He wished to know if that ruling had been revised or if it still had the force of law. Noting that the Commission's budget had

reportedly been reduced, he asked what impact that would have on its ability to monitor juvenile detention centres. The establishment of Family and Child Service Centres and Child Protection Groups in the atolls was an admirable initiative but steps had to be taken to support them and address the problems they faced.

14. The Committee would like to know whether the Convention had been officially translated into Dhivehi and whether it was taught as part of the school curriculum. He asked the delegation to explain what was being done to combat the widespread misconception that the Convention was in conflict with the teachings of Islam.

15. He was concerned that the periodic report made no mention of teenage prostitution. His own Internet research had confirmed that the phenomenon did exist, as was inevitable in a country so heavily involved in international tourism, and he wished to know what measures were being taken to combat it. Did the law hold hotels and resorts accountable and were individuals who used or promoted such services prosecuted?

16. **Ms. Khazova** said that Maldives had made significant progress in abolishing discrimination, especially for children born outside wedlock, but problems persisted. According to her information, non-Muslims could not be granted Maldivian citizenship, and yet the country was home to many foreigners; although she was aware that it might be impossible for a Maldivian Muslim woman to marry a foreign non-Muslim man, she wished to know whether a child born of such a union would have the right to Maldivian nationality. She asked the delegation to provide further information on the rules whereby a biological father could legally acknowledge paternity of a child born outside wedlock.

17. Although much had been done to create awareness among the population of the equality of girls and boys, she wished to know what steps were being taken to tackle gender stereotyping within the family and the subordinate position of girls, especially with regard to inheritance rights. She was concerned about discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children, who suffered discrimination in many respects despite the fact that, according to the Constitution, all individuals were equal before the law. She wished to know whether the State party would reconsider its attitude towards such children. Although birth registration rates had improved, a small minority still thought that such a practice was contrary to their beliefs. She asked for details about any progress made in countering that misconception and ensuring that all children were duly registered.

18. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether there were any measures in place to protect children from child pornography and other dangers on the Internet, and whether there were any programmes in schools to prevent harassment and bullying online. Given that children were prohibited from joining associations, she would like to know more about the mechanisms that allowed them to express themselves.

19. According to information before the Committee, censorship of the media was rife in the State party. She therefore asked how the Government was giving effect to children's right to access information appropriate to their stage of development.

20. Given the rise in divorce rates in the State party, she asked how the Government ensured that the best interests of the child were given priority in custody and child support proceedings, and whether divorcing couples were required to participate in reconciliation procedures. She asked whether divorce by repudiation was recognized in the State party. Lastly, she asked whether the Government planned to conduct a study to determine the root causes of the high divorce rate.

21. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** asked whether the State party had made any efforts to create a legislative framework that would encourage children's participation in

administrative decisions affecting them and in other areas of life. She asked what steps were being taken to raise awareness among judicial officials about the need to take children's views into account in custody proceedings. She requested further information on the handling of complaints received through the children's helpline.

22. She asked whether the Government was raising awareness among parents and teachers about the risks to children posed by social networks. She wished to know more about the codes of conduct established in some schools, including who drafted them and how they were implemented. Further details would be welcome regarding the circumstances under which children had been injured in political demonstrations. She wished to know the extent to which gangs were active in the State party.

23. Given the significant effects of climate change in the country, she asked what the Government was doing to raise children's awareness of the issue and to encourage their participation in efforts to combat climate change. Lastly, she requested clarification as to whether children who had no birth certificate were offered some alternative form of registration that allowed them to enrol in school.

24. **Mr. Nelson** requested statistical data, disaggregated by sex and type of offence, on the number of cases in which flogging had been handed down as a criminal punishment. He also requested further information on cases in which minors had been sentenced to life imprisonment. Referring to the case of a 17-year-old girl sentenced to flogging for the offence of fornication, he asked whether the other party involved in the offence had also been prosecuted.

25. Noting the low number of convictions for child sexual abuse, he asked whether judges and lawyers received training on the relevant legislative measures. He wished to know whether the shelters provided for in the Domestic Violence Act had been established, and he asked what measures were in place to protect child victims during the pretrial process, particularly when the alleged abuser was a family member. He wished to know whether the Evidence Bill had been drafted and, if so, when it would be adopted.

26. According to information before the Committee, the practice of female genital mutilation was on the rise in the State party. Was there any specific legislation prohibiting the practice and was anyone who promoted it prosecuted?

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

27. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure was currently being discussed within the Government but that no final decision had been taken thus far. His Government did not have any plans to withdraw its reservations to the Convention. The Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill, if enacted, would incorporate the Convention into national law and would address many of the issues raised by Committee members. With regard to inter-agency coordination, for example, the bill called for the establishment of a national coordination council to regulate the implementation of child protection laws in the country. The Social Work Bill would contain more specific regulations on issues such as joint custody.

28. Following a lengthy consultation period, both the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill and the Juvenile Justice Bill had been submitted to parliament. Once the latter had been adopted, the Criminal Code would be amended to bring it into line with the new legislation.

29. Several ministries had significantly increased their budget allocations for various child protection efforts. Both the existing laws and the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill defined a child as a person under 18 years of age. All child protection measures applied to anyone under the age of 18, although it was

permissible for children from 16 to 18 years of age to marry. The Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill also called for the appointment of a children's ombudsman.

30. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court had instructed the Human Rights Commission of Maldives to omit from its reports any information that was not backed up by evidence. The Commission was a State constitutional body, not a civil society organization, and as such it operated in accordance with the procedures set out in the Constitution and other relevant legislation. The Government was committed to ensuring the Commission's full operational independence. There had not been any strategic decision taken to decrease the Commission's budget. While an overall decrease in the State budget was reflected in the budget allocations for the Commission, its allocation had not decreased any more than those of other State agencies.

31. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that data on children were collected with the help of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and made available to all institutions working in the field of child protection. Efforts were under way to establish a new database on social protection for a number of vulnerable groups, including children.

32. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that Family and Child Service Centres had been established in each of the atolls and that the budget allocated to them had doubled from 2015 to 2016. The number of administrative and technical staff assigned to the centres had increased, and social workers employed by the centres received continuous training in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners. A pilot project would be carried out in 2016 with the aim of strengthening child protection mechanisms, and it was hoped that the project would lead to improved services throughout the country.

33. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that claims that female genital mutilation was on the rise in the country were baseless. In fact, female genital mutilation had never been part of Maldivian culture in recent memory, and the State authorities had not received any reports of it being introduced. The practice was banned by the Constitution and was classified as a criminal offence.

34. Any reports received of child sex tourism would be investigated. Tourist resorts were located on their own separate islands, away from the areas inhabited by Maldivians. Movements in and out of those resorts were carefully monitored, making it difficult to bring Maldivian children to the resorts for purposes of sex tourism.

35. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that the State party had been very active in disseminating information on the Convention. A new curriculum focusing on civic and human rights had been rolled out in schools nationwide in 2015. Human rights clubs had been set up in all schools and the Ahan — Listen to Us campaign had been launched in 2015, with the support of UNICEF, to raise awareness of children's rights among parents and children.

36. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that, under article 9 of the Constitution, any child born to a Maldivian man or woman was also a citizen of Maldives. A child born to a Maldivian woman and a non-Muslim foreign man would therefore have Maldivian citizenship. In the case of children born out of wedlock, parental rights were granted to the mother. Inheritance rights were governed by the principles of sharia law. With regard to LGBT persons, he recalled that Islam formed the basis of the Maldivian Constitution and all laws. There were very few reported cases of births not being registered, but the Ministry of Law and Gender took direct action if any were brought to its attention by the Family and Child Service Centres in the atolls. A special procedure had been agreed with the Ministry of Education to ensure that children could be enrolled in school pending formalization of their birth registration; work was

under way on a national registration bill. Parents or guardians could be prosecuted if they failed to comply with reminders to register or vaccinate their child.

37. **Ms. Khazova** asked whether it was possible for a biological father to acknowledge paternity of a child born out of wedlock.

38. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether any cases of female genital mutilation had ever been brought before the courts. Were efforts being made to promote the universality of human rights? And how was the promotion of gender equality in accordance with sharia law understood?

39. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that there had been no reported cases of female genital mutilation and thus no prosecutions. He would like to know what evidence had been provided that the practice was prevalent in Maldives.

40. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the biological fathers of children born out of wedlock were not entitled to claim paternity rights.

41. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that child protection was a priority for every school and preschool in the country. The Government's core policy for education was the "No Child Left Behind" policy. To ensure child protection in school settings, good partnerships had been developed with the police, the Ministry of Law and Gender and the Juvenile Justice Unit. With regard to cyberbullying, crime and prostitution, the Ministry of Education had recently launched a joint programme with the police and had a verbal agreement with the NGO Advocating the Rights of Children (ARC), which had developed a comprehensive programme to promote smart and safe Internet use. Risk assessments would begin in schools in 2016, so that action could be planned if necessary.

42. **Ms. Shafeea Riza** (Maldives) said that, under the Constitution, everyone had the right to freedom of association, including children. Under the 2003 Associations Act, children could not be founding members of an association, but there was nothing to prevent them from becoming regular members, and many did so. The Act was currently being reviewed to bring it into line with the 2008 Constitution.

43. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the right of both children and adults to access information was recognized under the Constitution, and expanded upon in the recent Access to Information Act. Censorship of information was constitutionally prohibited, even in a state of emergency. The high divorce rate was one of the most pressing social issues in Maldives. The best interests of the child were taken into account in custody decisions, and the relevant officials received regular training on that issue. The Family Act provided for a lengthy reconciliation process for divorcing couples; exceptions were made only in the case of domestic violence. If a divorce was concluded outside the court system, the husband was fined and the divorce had to be registered judicially. There were plans to carry out a study into the root causes of the high divorce rate.

44. **Mr. Ashraf** (Maldives) said that the children's helpline set up in 2009, which allowed children to report cases of child abuse and request assistance, had registered more than 2,000 calls in 2015. Cases were referred to the Ministry of Law and Gender and dealt with in the same way as all other reports of abuse.

45. **Mr. Nelson** said that one of the Committee's sources on female genital mutilation was a former Maldivian Attorney General, Mr. Husnu Al Suood, who in 2009 had stated that the people responsible for reviving the practice in Addu were religious followers who preached that it was compulsory.

46. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that codes of conduct in schools set out the ethical standards to which teachers were expected to adhere and covered issues such as interacting with students and parents and managing student behaviour.

47. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the new bill on children's rights included provisions to promote the participation of children in a range of areas. Climate change was being addressed as a key issue in schools, and environment clubs had been set up in all schools. The Ministry of Environment and Energy had conducted a nationwide awareness-raising programme for children on the impact of climate change.

48. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that there was no gender discrimination in access to education or health services. Gender parity had been achieved in primary education. The Ministry of Law and Gender had launched a programme to raise awareness of prenuptial agreements in order to minimize the impact of divorce on women.

49. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said it was true that a 15-year-old girl convicted of fornication had been sentenced to flogging in 2013. However, the State had brought an appeal on her behalf and the High Court had overturned the ruling. There had been no other cases of flogging of children.

50. **The Chair** said that while the Committee welcomed the fact that that ruling had been overturned, it remained concerned that the possibility of imposing such a sentence existed.

51. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said it was not true that the death penalty could be ordered for children as young as 7 years of age. By law, the age of criminal responsibility was 10. Children aged between the ages of 10 and 15 had the benefit of an excuse defence, except for *hadd* offences.

52. **Ms. Winter** asked if that meant that the death penalty could be ordered for children aged between 10 and 15 who had committed a *hadd* offence.

53. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said it was theoretically possible that a child aged between 10 and 15 could be sentenced to death for the crime of wilful murder. The death penalty had been ordered for minors in five cases but none of the penalties had been enforced. Four of the minors had committed the offences at the age of 17 and one at the age of 15 but all had been over the age of 18 when sentenced. A de facto moratorium had been in place for many years but there had recently been a policy shift on the death penalty. There were ideological differences of opinion with regard to the death penalty globally, but as Maldivian laws provided for it, it could be carried out in accordance with the 2014 regulations, which included a range of safeguards. The victim's family received counselling, with an emphasis on forgiving the accused, in accordance with sharia law. To date the death penalty had not been enforced.

54. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether the State party planned to establish a juvenile justice system in line with the Convention and to prohibit the death penalty and life sentences for minors.

55. **The Chair** said that while there were ideological differences of opinion concerning the death penalty generally, there was no ambiguity in the Convention when it came to the death penalty for minors. Even if sentences were never enforced, the very act of pronouncing the death penalty for offences committed by persons under the age of 18 was of serious concern to the Committee and should be prohibited. He requested an update on the bill on the enforcement of the death penalty and asked how the fact that death penalty and flogging sentences were automatically appealed tallied with the implementation of, in particular, articles 37 and 6 of the Convention.

56. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the Juvenile Justice Bill included provisions on the age of criminal responsibility; it would be for parliament to decide on the matter.

taking into consideration the provisions of the Convention. The bill on the enforcement of the death penalty had been drafted but not yet finalized. Since the enactment of the Special Measures Act in 2009, there had been 74 convictions for child sexual abuse. Lawyers, judges, prosecutors and police investigators were systematically trained to ensure that children were not doubly victimized and that their best interests were taken into account. There was currently one shelter in Male and four in different atolls, but the aim was to have one on all atolls within the next three years. The first draft of the Evidence Bill had been circulated to all stakeholders and comments were being awaited.

57. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that she would appreciate information on the situation of the children without birth certificates who were given a provisional certificate allowing them only to enrol in school. She asked whether amendments to the Associations Act would provide for the participation of children in political activities. She would welcome information on any efforts made by the authorities to help teachers and parents give children guidance on how to use the Internet and social media safely.

58. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) stressed that all children born in the country were issued with birth certificates. In some cases, the process could take time, but children awaiting a birth certificate still enrolled in school.

59. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that the Ministry of Law and Gender had published booklets for parents about the safe use of the Internet by their children and distributed them over a large number of atolls. The Ministry had also organized events, for both parents and children, on Internet safety.

60. **Mr. Nelson** asked whether the authorities had any information on the teen suicide rate in the State party. He wondered what specific issues the National Mental Health Policy addressed and what resources had been set aside to implement it. He also wondered whether mental health treatment was widely available.

61. Statistics showed that a large percentage of persons in the 15 to 19 age range used drugs in the Maldives. He therefore asked whether the State party ran any programmes specifically for children who used drugs, whether it had any inpatient drug treatment and rehabilitation centres, and, if so, whether they were all located in Male, the capital, or whether they could be found elsewhere in the country. Were anti-drug messages delivered in schools?

62. More information on what the Juvenile Justice Bill was designed to accomplish would be welcome. He took it that it would not abolish corporal punishment or life imprisonment, but it would nonetheless be interesting to know whether it introduced any diversionary penalties and when it was expected to enter into force. Had any measures been taken to facilitate its implementation?

63. He would appreciate clarification on the information shown in the tables found in the replies to the list of issues. For example, was the number of minors arrested for various offences in 2012 to 2014 roughly equal to the number of prosecutions? In the same connection, he wondered whether children accused of offences were entitled to the assistance of counsel and, if so, whether the State party funded a legal aid scheme for minors who could not afford counsel. He also wondered whether detained minors and adults were held in separate facilities and whether there were juvenile courts in such locations as Addu and Fuvahmulah.

64. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that the Committee was concerned by the State party's apparent lack of statistical information on the number of children with disabilities in its territory. The authorities did not seem to know, for example, how many such children did not attend school or how many were institutionalized. He

asked what statistics the authorities drew on to develop policies on children with disabilities and what they intended to do to begin collecting relevant statistics. He wondered whether the 39 units for children with special educational needs were open to children with physical or sensory disabilities and whether the establishment of such units could really be described as a measure taken to develop an inclusive education policy and address the discrimination faced by children with disabilities in the school setting. He also wished to know whether the Government had conducted outreach campaigns to combat the stigmatization of children with disabilities and whether it had made any efforts to encourage parents of children with disabilities to ensure that their children were included in the State party's disability registry.

65. **Ms. Winter** said that she would appreciate a response from the delegation to reports that girls were still being withdrawn from school at a very young age and that children in conflict with the law were denied their right to an education. The Committee had also received reports that instructional resources, including school textbooks, contained xenophobic material. One grade 11 textbook evidently even called on its readers to take part in jihad against those who obstructed Islam. She wondered whether the authorities had seen those books and whether they had taken any action to warn children against leaving the country to fight for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

66. She wished to know whether children working for their families' businesses were legally protected from exploitation, as the provision of the Employment Act prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 16 made an exception for children working for such businesses. In addition, she asked whether the State party had any plans to define more clearly the provision of the Act under which persons under the age of 18 were prohibited from being employed in any way that could have a detrimental effect on their health, education, safety or conduct, and whether labour inspectors had received training on the special protections required by children. Lastly, she asked whether children addicted to drugs could choose between treatment and punishment and, if not, whether there were any plans to provide for such a possibility.

67. **Ms. Khazova** asked whether the placement of children through *kafalah* was recognized by the State party and, if so, whether there were mechanisms to ensure that children so placed were not exploited. She also asked whether the children of incarcerated parents could maintain contact with their parents and whether children newly born to women in prison were able to stay with their mothers.

68. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that she would appreciate information on any efforts the State party had made to promote breastfeeding. She also wondered what educational services were provided for children up to 3 years of age.

69. **The Chair** asked what efforts the authorities had made to engage with religious leaders in an attempt to win support for such initiatives as age-appropriate sex education. He wondered what consequences parents faced when they refused to allow their children to be vaccinated. What happened, for example, when a parent attempting to enrol a child in school was unable to produce the required vaccination card?

70. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that preventing drug abuse was a major concern. By law, the State was required to establish drug rehabilitation centres for children. One such centre, for which a budget had already been allocated, was currently being set up. For the moment, there were no legal provisions allowing drug addicts to choose between treatment and punishment. The State was also required to have a comprehensive drug prevention strategy. As part of that strategy, the Ministry of Education organized drug prevention programmes in the schools.

71. **Ms. Rishmee** (Maldives) said that plans had been made to designate mental health focal points in all health facilities. They would be responsible for maintaining patient lists and placing orders for medication.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

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Committee on the Rights of the Child
Seventy-first session

Summary record of the 2078th (Chamber A) meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 19 January 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Aldoseri

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Second periodic report of Zimbabwe (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Second periodic report of Zimbabwe (continued) (CRC/C/ZWE/2; CRC/C/ZWE/Q/2 and Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.55)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Zimbabwe took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe), referring to the questions raised at the Committee's 2076th meeting, said that he would entrust the responses to the various members of his delegation.

3. **Mr. Chinake** (Zimbabwe) recalled that a question had been asked about financial assistance to households in which children lived solely with their grandparents. "Child-headed" and "granny-headed" households were catered for under the public assistance programme and were eligible to participate in a health assistance programme. Under the basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), priority was given to children from such households for the receipt of educational grants. Grandparents were eligible for support in reassuming their parenting roles and learning new parenting skills. In addition, the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer Programme (HSCT) provided support to households that were labour-constrained or food-poor: 72 per cent of the households currently under the programme were headed by elderly persons, and 2 per cent by children. According to national census figures, 2.9 per cent of Zimbabwean households were headed by children.

4. With regard to the organization and monitoring of institutionalized care for children, he said that at present, 8 children's institutions were Government-run and 99 were privately operated, primarily by churches and non-governmental organizations. After meeting the criteria set out in the Children's Act, children's institutions had to pass inspections twice a year and satisfy the National Residential Care Standards. Children could be placed in residential care institutions only pursuant to an order from a children's court.

5. In response to a question from **Mr. Guráň** (Country Task Force), he said that private institutions for children had to be registered in accordance with the Children's Act and the Private Voluntary Organizations Act.

6. **Ms. Sandberg** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) asked about the specific requirements that private children's institutions needed to fulfil in order to obtain accreditation.

7. **Mr. Chinake** (Zimbabwe) said that they had to meet the relevant health requirements of the Public Health Act and obtain a recommendation from the Minister of Health and Child Welfare. Caregivers working in such institutions had to be cleared for infectious diseases and vetted to ensure that they had not committed any offences against children. Residential care institutions had to maintain a child/caregiver ratio of 15 to 1 and meet minimum requirements for the amount of space allotted to each child.

8. **Mr. Guráň** asked what level of professional experience was required of caregivers in such institutions.

9. **Mr. Chinake** (Zimbabwe) said that each institution was required to have a qualified social worker on hand, and if they housed children under the age of 1, they had to have a qualified staff nurse who was registered with the Health Professions Authority. Other child-care workers had to have basic experience in caring for children.

10. **Ms. Sandberg** said that the availaility of well-trained social workers appeared to be problematic.

11. **Mr. Chinake** (Zimbabwe) said that there was indeed a demand for such workers but that it was being addressed through in-service training programmes, especially those offered by institutions of higher learning. As a result, the social worker/child ratio had been reduced from 1 to 50,000 in 2004 to its current level of 1 to 20,000. Basic training was also being provided to paraprofessional social workers, known as "social welfare assistants".

12. Many children were in informal foster-care arrangements that had not been ordered by the courts and in which care was provided primarily by the child's extended family or community. Such arrangements were grounded in the Ubuntu philosophy that all children were everyone's children. Children in formal foster care arrangements received State support in the form of a monthly child allowance.

13. **Ms. Sandberg** asked whether foster care was regulated by law and how it was monitored.

14. **Mr. Chinake** (Zimbabwe) said that prospective foster parents were assessed on the basis of social, economic and psychological criteria in order to determine their suitability. For the purposes of monitoring, social workers were required to have monthly contact with the child and the foster parents in a variety of settings.

15. Turning to the issue of adoption, he noted that national and inter-country adoptions were regulated by the Children's Act. Prospective adoptive parents who were not Zimbabwean had to satisfy the suitability criteria of their country of origin as well as those of Zimbabwe. The authorities were guided in their suitability assessment by the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, even though Zimbabwe had not yet ratified it. In 2012, Zimbabwe had begun a process to facilitate the ratification of that Convention and was making steady progress in that direction.

16. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** (Country Task Force) asked whether prospective foster parents were screened in order to ensure that they had not committed sexual offences against children.

17. **Mr. Chinake** (Zimbabwe) said that the assessment of potential foster parents included a determination as to whether they had committed any kind of child abuse, whether physical, sexual or emotional in nature.

18. **Ms. Ndlovu** (Zimbabwe) said that the State party denied the reports alluded to at the Committee's 2076th meeting that the Public Order and Security Act had been used to deny children the right to march in commemoration of Universal Children's Day. The involvement of the police on that occasion had been solely to control traffic and to ensure the security of the children.

19. **Ms. Msika** (Zimbabwe), referring to reports that children were forced to participate in political activities, said that those reports were untrue and that schools were primarily institutions of learning.

20. **Mr. Gastaud** asked whether children could exercise the right to assemble and associate freely solely when official authorization was given for that purpose. He asked how the restriction described in paragraph 179 of the report ("freedom of expression is subject to parental discipline") could be deemed to be compatible with the child's right to be heard.

21. **Ms. Ndlovu** (Zimbabwe) said that the Public Order and Security Act did not apply to activities carried out by children or gatherings that were intended to favour or further

their interests or rights. The police were invited to such events only for the purpose of ensuring their peaceful conduct.

22. **Ms. Msika** (Zimbabwe) said that due recognition was given to children's views on national issues and matters that affected them, as illustrated by the 2011 consultative process in which the views of children had been taken into account for the incorporation of children's rights into the new Constitution. The judicial system, and in particular the children's courts, generally permitted presiding officers to consult children on matters affecting their welfare, in keeping with the principle of the best interests of the child.

23. Children's freedom of expression was upheld through public communications platforms, drama societies and public media. Each year, Zimbabwe joined other countries in commemorating the International Children's Day of Broadcasting. Another avenue for children's freedom of expression was the Children's Parliament, which served to promote leadership development, advocacy on children's rights and children's involvement in issues of governance.

24. **Ms. Jiri** (Zimbabwe) said that children's right to privacy in judicial proceedings was protected under section 57 of the Constitution and was further guaranteed under the Children's Act, which prohibited the publication of any information that would reveal the identity of a child involved in any court proceedings. Infringements of those provisions were the exception, not the rule. The Zimbabwe Media Commission applied the Code of Conduct for Zimbabwean Media Practitioners on the basis of section 249 of the Constitution. Among the functions of the Media Commission were to promote and enforce good practices and ethics in the media, to receive and consider complaints by the public and, where appropriate, to take action against journalists and other persons employed by the media or broadcasting who were found to have breached any law or any code of conduct applicable to them. Other reporting mechanisms could also be used to report such breaches.

25. **Ms. Mufukare** (Zimbabwe) said that, under the Constitution, every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe had the right to a basic State-funded education, including adult basic education and further education. The Government's policy was that no school-age child could be denied the right to education on account of non-payment of school fees. Since the payment of fees was a parental responsibility, schools were required to enrol all eligible learners and to propose payment arrangements to any parents who faced difficulties. Indigent children, including orphans and vulnerable children, were given priority for educational assistance through the BEAM programme.

26. **Ms. Sandberg** questioned whether, in practice, the Government succeeded in realizing that policy and whether parents were made sufficiently aware that they could enrol their children, despite financial difficulties. She asked about the extent to which the dropout rate for students between primary and secondary education was related to unaffordable school fees.

27. **Ms. Mufukare** (Zimbabwe) said that parents who faced challenges in paying school fees were made aware of the options available to them, such as installment plans.

28. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that Zimbabwe had a 92 per cent literacy rate — among the highest in Africa. The Government was engaged in a major drive to progressively implement free and compulsory education.

29. **Ms. Mufukare** (Zimbabwe) said that an administrative circular had been issued that prohibited teachers from taking on extra activities during working hours, and disciplinary action was taken against those found to be in breach of the rules. Professional standards for teachers had recently been introduced; professional ethics was a component of teacher capacity-building programmes. It was true that, prior to the introduction of the Government's policy calling for no child to be denied access to

education, students had been dropping out of school because their parents could not afford the fees.

30. The Zimbabwean school system was divided into public and private schools, the latter being under the responsibility of various authorities. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was authorized to monitor all schools in Zimbabwe with regard to quality of education and soundness of finances. Schools that failed to comply could have their registration rescinded, and any school that operated without a registration certificate was closed down.

31. Satellite schools had been established mainly in order to reduce walking distances for children. They were as-yet unregistered schools that operated under the supervision of registered schools, known as "mother schools". In terms of the quality of education, they were no poorer than regular schools, but in terms of their infrastructure, they were definitely disadvantaged.

32. **Ms. Sandberg** asked whether satellite schools were sufficiently staffed with properly qualified teachers and whether the teacher/student ratio was the same as that of regular schools. She wished to know whether the Government envisaged raising teachers' salaries in order to obviate the need for them to take on additional work.

33. **Ms. Mufukare** (Zimbabwe) said that the number of qualified teachers sufficed for all schools, even satellite schools.

34. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the issue of higher salaries concerned the entire civil service; however, its particular relevance to teacher retention was generally recognized.

35. **Ms. Mufukare** (Zimbabwe), replying to a question asked earlier concerning professionals in early childhood development, said that they were qualified teachers with diplomas who had attended a teacher's college. Paraprofessionals without diplomas were given basic training, and as soon as they acquired requisite levels, they could enrol in teacher's colleges.

36. In response to the question whether schools were used for military purposes, she noted that schools could be used for national or government programmes, such as elections and the census. However, they could not be used for activities likely to disrupt the normal school day. When reports of the misuse of school facilities were received, they were investigated and the appropriate action was taken. In an effort to ensure that schools were not misused, the monitoring of education activities had been strengthened, and the Ministry responsible for education held regular consultative meetings with teacher associations to discuss issues of mutual interest.

37. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that access to education for children with disabilities had increased significantly in recent years following the adoption by the Ministry of Education of an inclusive approach that sought to ensure that, to the extent possible, they were integrated into mainstream schools. From 2005 to 2012, for example, the number of schools that had enrolled children with disabilities had risen from 1,097 to 1,788. The Government was continuing to work hard to address such issues as physical access to school infrastructure and the provision of appropriate educational materials. A number of specialized institutions existed to cater for children who required additional support owing to certain disabilities, such as cerebral palsy. Those establishments, which were generally run by private voluntary organizations, received technical and financial support from the Government.

38. As to access to health services, the policy on exemption from user fees for women and children under the age of five remained in force, despite some difficulties in its implementation caused by financial challenges over the years. Although the policy provided for free access to antiretroviral therapy for children, the rate of coverage

remained low, at 46 per cent. A number of steps had therefore been taken, including measures to build capacity for the early diagnosis of HIV in infants, such as training programmes for government medical officers at the provincial and district levels. Currently, 57 per cent of infants who were born of HIV-positive mothers received their first virological test within two months of birth, and the percentage of that received antiretroviral prophylaxis had risen from 26 per cent in 2007 to 86 per cent in 2014. Thanks to those and other efforts, the under-five mortality rate had fallen from 94 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009 to 75 per 1,000 in 2014. It was expected that the continued use of high-impact, low-cost interventions would result in further incremental gains in the coming years. Those interventions would focus on expanding the immunization programmes, increasing the use of mosquito nets and encouraging breastfeeding.

39. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked what proportion of the national budget was allocated to health. With respect to HIV/AIDS, she wished to know whether a reference system was in place in rural areas; whether Zimbabwe had received support from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and, if so, what impact it had had; and whether any study had been undertaken to determine the number of pregnant women who had been tested for HIV/AIDS and the number of children co-infected with HIV and tuberculosis or malaria. She enquired whether the authorities had established a system of sentinel sites and, if so, what funding had been allocated to the scheme and how it operated. Lastly, she wished to know whether the Government was committed to pursuing the objective of an AIDS-free generation.

40. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that the annual budget allocated to the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare had ranged from $US 330 million to $US 390 million in recent years. Significant financial support for a number of health programmes that addressed child health matters had also been received from the Global Fund and various other international development partners. The Government was committed to eliminating new cases of HIV infection, particularly among children. Although it was still high, the national HIV prevalence rate had fallen from 33 per cent to approximately 15 per cent. Some 93 per cent of women were covered by prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programmes. According to recent estimates, 9.6 per cent of children born to HIV-positive mothers were infected with HIV. An extensive programme had been put in place to provide training for health professionals and community support groups involved in the delivery of PMTCT services.

41. According to population-based health surveys, the level of stunting had decreased from 34 per cent in 1999 to 27 per cent in 2014, while the acute malnutrition rate had fallen from 8 per cent to less than 3 per cent over the same period. However, further efforts were needed to reduce the chronic malnutrition rate, which remained high.

42. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked how the authorities proposed to address the disparities in stunting rates between urban and rural areas.

43. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that, as part of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation, the Government had been working to strengthen food security and nutrition by encouraging increased food crop production. Furthermore, community-based malnutrition management programmes had been put in place to ensure that children received the nutritional supplements they required.

44. Although 92 per cent of newborns were breastfed within 24 hours of birth, only 31 per cent of infants were exclusively breastfed during the first 6 months of life. The Government had therefore introduced a number of programmes and strategies to promote more positive cultural attitudes to breastfeeding. Zimbabwe was implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

45. Thanks to an expanded immunization programme that sought to ensure the availability of vaccines for all children, full vaccination coverage had increased from 63

per cent in 2005 to 69 per cent in 2014, while the coverage rate for measles had remained consistently above 80 per cent. No measles outbreaks had occurred in the past three years. With support from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Government had introduced the pentavalent vaccine in 2010 and the pneumococcal vaccine in 2011 with a view to preventing such diseases as pneumonia and meningitis.

46. Malaria remained a challenge. Under the National Malaria Control Programme, the authorities had encouraged the use of indoor residual spraying, intermittent presumptive treatment for pregnant women and long-lasting insecticidal nets. As a result of those efforts, the malaria incidence rate had fallen from 95 cases per 1,000 population in 2007 to 25 cases per 1,000 in 2011. Twenty per cent of the cases reported in 2011 concerned children under the age of five.

47. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked what funding was allocated to the nutrition programme and what proportion of the immunization programme was funded by the Government. She also wished to know what steps the authorities took to ensure the use of mosquito nets and the delivery of vitamin A supplements.

48. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that between 10 and 15 per cent of the operational component of the health budget was generally allocated to nutritional issues. Programmes that focused on therapeutic nutrition in particular were supported by international partners, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

49. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked whether such partnerships were bound by specific time frames.

50. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that, while international partnership programmes ran for fixed periods, their successful deployment had resulted in continued funding cycles and had attracted further investment. However, the Government was also exploring ways to sustain programmes in the absence of donor funding.

The meeting was suspended at 4.25 p.m. and resumed at 4.40 p.m.

51. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe), responding to an earlier question about health-care services for pregnant women, said that over the previous 3 years some 2,000 new midwives had been trained and subsequently deployed throughout the country and that government medical officers specializing in maternal care had been appointed to all district hospitals. Furthermore, primary care nurses in rural areas were receiving training in midwifery skills. A number of steps had been taken to give effect to the national strategy on adolescent sexual and reproductive health, including the development of a national compendium of indicators, a framework for monitoring relevant programmes and a database on organizations serving young people. In addition, 26 health-care professionals had been trained on the provision of child-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.

52. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked whether the post of childcare coordinator had been established.

53. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that the deputy director of the Directorate of Family Health acted as coordinator for child health care matters; however, the post was currently vacant following the recent departure of the occupant.

54. **Ms. Sibiya** (Zimbabwe), replying to an earlier question, said that the Government was in the process of drafting a juvenile justice bill with a view to bringing national legislation into line with the Convention and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice. As part of that process, a study of the South African juvenile justice system would be undertaken with the support of development partners.

55. **Ms. Jiri** (Zimbabwe) said that, under the Constitution, children could not be detained except as a measure of last resort and that, if they were detained, they should be held for the shortest appropriate period, kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18 and treated in a manner that took account of their age. Furthermore, under the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act, the competent authorities were empowered to release juvenile offenders into the care and custody of their parents or guardian pending their appearance before a court or magistrate; alternatively, offenders could be held in a place of safety, as defined in the Children's Protection and Adoption Act. Juvenile offenders were occasionally remanded into police custody when no other alternative was available. The Legal Aid Directorate, which was currently operating in 6 of the country's 10 provinces, provided for legal representation for all indigent persons, including children. The Government was working, with the support of international development partners, to establish offices in the remaining four provinces. Nearly one thousand children had received legal assistance under a national strategy designed to improve children's access to justice that had run from 2012 to 2015.

56. Consideration was currently being given to raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 7 years to 12. At present, child offenders below the age of seven were dealt with by probation officials from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. While there was currently no prohibition on the imposition of life imprisonment on juveniles, no child had in fact ever been sentenced to such a term.

57. The Pretrial Diversion Programme, which had been introduced in 2008, remained in operation. It was aimed at diverting young offenders from the formal court system as a way of preventing them from acquiring a criminal record at an early age. The programme sought to rehabilitate young offenders and fully integrate them into society; it targeted in particular offenders who had committed crimes that were punishable by prison terms of two years or less. In view of the success of the pilot project, the Government was planning to roll the programme out nationwide.

58. **Mr. Gastaud** asked what the minimum age of detention was and for which offences a child of that age could be held in custody, what was the average length of pretrial detention for juvenile offenders, whether there were alternatives to detention and whether there were judges and/or courts that specialized in juvenile justice.

59. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** pointed out that, if the sentence of life imprisonment was never applied to minors, the State party might consider repealing the provision altogether.

60. **Ms. Sandberg** requested confirmation that funding would be secured to ensure that the Pretrial Diversion Programme was resumed and expanded in 2016.

61. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked whether juveniles in detention had access to health care.

62. **Ms. Jiri** (Zimbabwe) said that, while there were no judges or courts specializing in juvenile matters, special measures were taken by the courts when the offender was underage. The new legislation being prepared on children would address that shortcoming. If a child over seven was considered to be capable of grasping the consequences of his or her actions, he or she could be imprisoned. In 2015, the Government had committed itself to continuing to fund the Pretrial Diversion Programme, which provided for alternative sentences, such as mandatory counselling and community service. There were doctors in all prisons.

63. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked whether the State party had any immediate plans to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12.

64. **Ms. Jiri** (Zimbabwe) replied that the new legislation on children would address that concern.

65. **Ms. Sibiya** (Zimbabwe) said that the minimum age of employment had been raised to 16 and that Zimbabwe had ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). By law, children who had been exposed to the worst forms of child labour were considered to be children in need of care. Child protection was tackled from many angles, inter alia through the Constitution, the Trafficking in Persons Act, the Interministerial Task Force on Human Trafficking, a ban on the commercial exploitation of children and the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labour. As a result of the Government's efforts, child labour, particularly in the mining sector, was declining.

66. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** requested specific data on child labour.

67. **Mr. Gastaud** asked whether there were enough labour inspectors to identify violations of children's rights and whether any employers who had infringed the regulations on child labour had been prosecuted and convicted. He requested further information on the content of the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labour. He enquired about efforts regarding street children, specifically whether there were any strategies, programmes and preventive measures in place.

68. **Ms. Sandberg** said that it would be helpful to know more about the Government's efforts to prevent child trafficking. She asked whether the State party had plans to submit its initial report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which was slightly overdue. She would welcome additional information about programmes to combat gender-based violence.

69. **Ms. Sibiya** (Zimbabwe) said that gathering the information for the initial report was not a simple task, but that the report was under preparation. Various initiatives had been launched to reduce poverty — one of the root causes of child labour — such as harmonized cash transfers for families and food-for-work schemes for unemployed parents.

70. **Mr. Ndlovu** (Zimbabwe) said that a study carried out in 2014, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), had identified approximately 4,700 street children, over 1,000 of whom had stated that they lived in the street, while the rest returned home at night. Nearly one quarter of the children were runaways. In the light of the study's findings, programmes had been designed to remove children from the streets, provide them with rehabilitative care, trace their families and promote family and community reintegration, and multisectoral task forces had been set up at the local level. When children could not be returned to their families, they were placed in foster care or in an institution. The study had also found that most street children were between the ages of 17 and 18 and predominantly male: that had led to the creation of life and vocational skills programmes to teach them to support themselves. Activities were carried out to raise awareness of the dangers of life on the streets. Zimbabwe had signed memorandums of understanding with a number of neighbouring countries to deal with the issue of unaccompanied migrant children, and two centres had been established to house them pending their return to their country of origin.

71. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development was at the forefront of efforts to eliminate gender-based violence. It had set up an interministerial task force that had already been on missions in the field and was to examine the causes of gender-based violence in a wide range of settings, including the home, school and the workplace, and make recommendations on how to best tackle them. Although there was no data as yet, he stressed that the issue was a topic of discussion at the highest levels.

72. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff**, repeating a question asked at the Committee's 2076th meeting, enquired about the situation of the children affected by Operation Murambatsvina and the Chingwizi flood.

73. **Ms. Sandberg**, noting that the delegation's comments on gender-based violence were promising, asked what specific actions would be taken, particularly with regard to negative gender stereotyping.

74. **Ms. Aho Assouma** pointed out that the delegation had not yet replied to the question on children affected by HIV/AIDS and also asked what services, including mental health care, were available to victims of violence.

75. **Mr. Gwinji** (Zimbabwe) said that the HIV/AIDS programme was comprehensive and covered the specific needs of children, although it could certainly be improved through the introduction of new technologies. The country had two children's hospitals with specialist staff. The initiation of antiretroviral therapy had been decentralized to all provinces and districts, with health-care providers receiving all the appropriate training. While there had been a lag in the provision of services to children living with HIV/AIDS, because the disease had initially been seen as an adult issue, a growing number of paediatric cases were being treated. Prevention campaigns were also directed at children, both in and out of school. The National Action Plan for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children addressed that group's access to care and education. Children living with HIV/AIDS were not placed in institutions; rather, they were integrated into society and the general health-care system.

76. **Ms. Charumbira** (Zimbabwe) said that the Government had striven to restore the dignity of the over 15,600 victims of the flood around the Tokwe Mukorsi dam, near Chingwizi. Following the declaration of a state of emergency, the Government of Japan had provided US$ 1.5 million which was being channelled into meeting the needs of the children, in cooperation with UNICEF. Particular efforts were made to treat diarrhoeal diseases and acute malnutrition, provide micronutrient support, establish nutrition/food security committees and child protection committees, ensure access to drinking water and sanitation and encourage good hygiene practices. There were five primary schools and one secondary school, as well as a rural health centre, in Chingwizi. The Government was working with national and international stakeholders to assist vulnerable children, including by reuniting them with their families. It was also looking for sites for voluntary resettlement and paying compensation to displaced households.

77. Operation Murambatsvina, also known as Operation Restore Order, had been launched in 2005 as part of a National Housing Delivery Programme. Nearly 7,500 households had been resettled and the children enjoyed the same level of access to basic services as local children. The Government had funded the construction of housing, the creation of livelihood opportunities and the purchase of land for housing cooperatives.

78. **Ms. Sandberg** (Coordinator, Country Task Force), thanking the delegation for a constructive dialogue, said that the State party had demonstrated its motivation and commitment to the protection of children. The Committee looked forward to all the legislative amendments and new laws to be introduced and hoped that the legislative process would be completed shortly, especially with regard to the age of criminal responsibility and the situation of children born out of wedlock. She hoped that the Government would find a lasting solution to the shortage of funding.

79. **Mr. Guráň** (Country Task Force) expressed appreciation for what had been a very professional discussion.

80. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** (Country Task Force) thanked the State party for a constructive dialogue and, echoing the words of Nelson Mandela, said that there was no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way it treated its children.

81. **Mr. Parirenyatwa** (Zimbabwe) said that the dialogue had been very stimulating and that the Committee's pertinent questions had provided useful insight into the issues to be addressed. He hoped that, together with the partners and other stakeholders who

had made the journey to Geneva, the delegation had been able to place the situation of children's rights in Zimbabwe in its proper perspective.

82. **The Chair** congratulated the State party on the uncommon inclusion of representatives of the Ministry of Finance and the Registrar Office in its delegation, especially in the light of the Committee's draft general comment on children's rights and public spending.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Summary record of the 2079th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 19 January 2016, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr Mezmur

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Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives (continued)
(CRC/C/MDV/4-5; CRC/C/MDV/Q/4-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Maldives took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Ahmed** (Maldives), replying to questions asked by Committee members at the 2077th meeting, said that the Government took the attendance of very young children at political rallies very seriously and had publically condemned such behaviour. The Electoral Commission had investigated the matter and had recently issued fines to the political parties found to have encouraged children's participation. The Government had also adopted legislation against gang violence involving children and the Juvenile Justice Unit worked with former child gang members to promote their reintegration into society. Furthermore, various community outreach programmes had been conducted across the country to promote child protection and reduce the number of children becoming involved in gangs.

3. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the Government would take steps to harmonize existing child protection policies and devise a comprehensive strategic action plan to protect children's rights. In that connection, efforts had already been made to increase the amount of resources allocated to health, education and social services aimed at children.

4. **Ms. Rishmee** (Maldives) said that measures had been adopted to strengthen child mental health services, including the introduction of a national mental health policy. Steps had also been taken to reduce and prevent drug abuse among children, which often exacerbated existing mental illness.

5. **Ms. Shafeea Riza** (Maldives) said that the Juvenile Justice Bill, due to enter into force at the end of 2016, established minimum standards for the investigation and detention of minors and provided for child-friendly arrangements during the judicial process. In addition, steps had been taken to actively promote non-custodial sentences for minors found guilty of lesser offences. As to children's access to legal assistance, article 53 of the Constitution set forth that the State must provide legal representation for children without family or whose family were unable to afford a lawyer where appropriate.

6. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that children in detention were held separately from adults. All cases involving minors were referred to the national juvenile court for consideration.

7. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that there was a lack of sufficient disaggregated data, particularly in regard to children with disabilities. The Government had taken steps to improve data collection by establishing a national database and would continue to provide financial assistance to persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities.

8. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that measures had been adopted to promote inclusive education for children with disabilities, including through the creation of a national disability council and the establishment of 50 specialist teaching units in mainstream schools. A new national curriculum had also been launched in 2015, which provided for personalized learning plans for children with disabilities. However, more work needed to be done in order to train mainstream teachers in inclusive education practices, which would require significant time and resources.

9. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that he would like to know more about the measures taken to improve the availability of data on persons with disabilities and to ensure that children with disabilities living on remote atolls had access to mainstream education.

10. **The Chair** (Country Rapporteur) asked what progress had been made to support children with thalassemia following the adoption of the Thalassemia Act.

11. **Mr. Ashraf** (Maldives) said that the Government had conducted numerous activities to raise awareness of disability and to promote an inclusive society, including through the organization of social, cultural and sporting events involving persons with disabilities. It had also provided disability cards offering significant discounts on a number of products and services to persons with disabilities and had greatly improved their access to health care and social services. Owing to the lack of disaggregated data, there were no concrete figures on the number of children with disabilities living in the Maldives. However, it was estimated that around 2 per cent of the population had one or more disability.

12. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that the Government had made significant efforts to facilitate the national registration process for persons with disabilities and had conducted several campaigns to raise awareness of the national database, with the active participation of civil society and the wider community. Since 2013, the Government had also launched social housing schemes reserved exclusively for persons with disabilities and had established special occupational therapy centres for children with disabilities.

13. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that children with disabilities living in remote atolls without access to a specialist teaching unit were taught in mainstream schools by specially trained teachers wherever possible. The Government planned to provide specialist training on teaching children with disabilities to at least one teacher per mainstream school by the end of 2016. Efforts had also been made to improve the overall education system, including the national curriculum, and to promote children's rights and gender equality. In recent years, the education completion rate for girls had stood at 100 per cent and girls continued to outperform boys at all levels of education.

14. **Ms. Winter** said that she would like further information on the dropout rate for girls in education and clarification on whether the 100 per cent completion rate for girls referred to primary or secondary education.

15. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that huge internal migratory flows meant that every year many children changed school and, as a result, completion rates sometimes amounted to 100 per cent. Children under house arrest pending trial could attend school and sit examinations.

16. **Ms. Winter** asked whether children in prison received schooling. She wished to know what percentage of girls finished their primary, secondary and tertiary education.

17. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) replied that the retention rate of girls in grades 1-10 was 100 per cent. Most imprisoned minors were over the age of 15. Their literacy and numeracy skills were assessed with a view to determining what technical or vocational education would be most appropriate for them. It was hoped that, with the assistance of the new United Nations Development Assistance Network Framework (2016-2020) and the United Nations Children's Fund, it would be possible to develop an alternative education programme for young people in detention centres, which would incorporate flexible learning strategies and make use of media and technology.

18. **Ms. Shafeea Riza** (Maldives), replying to the questions related to child labour, explained that under the Employment Act the Labour Relations Authority was the body which trained labour inspectors. The latter undertook regular inspections of

places of employment. There was indeed a need to improve legislation governing the employment of children in family businesses. Under the Child Rights Bill, the Minister in charge of the protection of children's rights would have discretion to harmonize regulations concerning the minimum working age in order to bring them into line with the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) of the International Labour Organization.

19. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the Family Act referred to kafalah. The Child Rights Bill contained very detailed provisions on the rights and responsibilities of foster parents and on State protection for foster children. Social welfare benefits were being extended to cover foster parents and children.

20. **Ms. Shafeea Riza** (Maldives) said that under the Prison and Parole Act children were entitled to visit parents in prison. A child born in prison could remain with his or her mother in a special facility separate from the rest of the prison up to the age of two.

21. **Ms. Rishmee** (Maldives), explaining policy on breastfeeding, said that 64 per cent of newborn babies were breastfed within one hour of birth; 92 per cent of newborn babies were breastfed within their first day of life and 48 per cent of infants were breastfed exclusively up to the age of 6 months. The average duration of breastfeeding was more than two years. A regulation concerning the production, quality and sale of breast-milk substitutes and feeding bottles had entered into force in January 2016. It was government policy to assist nursing mothers in the workforce, especially in the civil service, by granting them one year's maternity leave and time off to go home to breastfeed their child. Mothers with children under the age of 3 were given flexible working hours in order to have enough time to care for their offspring.

22. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked how many children were in prison.

23. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) undertook to reply to that question once he had received the relevant data. Replying to the question regarding action taken by religious teachers to combat the non-vaccination of children, he said that awareness-raising programmes were conducted with the help of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. Failure to register the birth of a child and to have him or her vaccinated constituted an offence. In such cases the police and prosecution services ensured that the parents or guardians took the requisite corrective action.

24. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that a child could be enrolled in school even without a vaccination card, or if he or she had not received a key vaccination, but in that case the school would inform the Ministry of Education, which would then report the matter to the Health Protection Agency. The latter would draw up an individual accelerated immunization protocol and forward it to the Ministry, which would monitor compliance therewith. Health centres counselled parents and, as a result, a 100 per cent success rate had been achieved with accelerated vaccinations.

25. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) replying to the question concerning the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, said that families had reportedly been approached by persons trying to recruit children for engagement in terrorist activities, but there was no evidence that any Maldivian children had actually been recruited for such purposes. However, the authorities of his country remained vigilant and were working with other countries to gather detailed information in that respect. The Maldivian intelligence agencies, police and security forces had foiled such recruiting attempts in the past. The fact that anti-terrorism legislation enacted a few months earlier criminalized not only participation in armed conflicts overseas, but also conspiring to take part in them or promoting the idea of joining in armed conflict in another country, would also act as a strong deterrent to any such conduct.

26. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** requested information on measures to disseminate the provisions of the Optional Protocol in schools, the police force, the army and any other relevant authority.

27. 27 **Mr. Nelson** (Country Rapporteur) asked to what extent civil society participated in the resolution of child-related issues. Was it mandatory to seek the views of all civil society organizations prior to the introduction of measures in certain areas? He was keen to learn of any areas in which such consultation had taken place. He wished to know if complaints of harassment of human rights defenders had been investigated and whether any prosecutions had ensued. He wondered whether any steps had been taken to combat the intimidation of human rights defenders. Lastly, he asked what measures had been adopted to counter the non-reporting or underreporting of the sexual abuse of minors and to give the lie to the view that it was better not to report such cases in order to preserve the victim's reputation.

28. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that representatives of civil society sat on the Foster Care Panel and the Disability Council. Civil society organizations regularly conducted training programmes for social workers. NGOs collaborated very actively with the Government on child protection programmes, especially those directed towards children with disabilities.

29. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the forthcoming Child Rights Act made provision for a comprehensive coordination mechanism, so that representation of civil society would become mandatory in the above-mentioned instances. The National Integrity Commission could investigate complaints of intimidation and harassment by the police, customs and immigration officials or members of the Correctional Service. The Human Rights Commission investigated all other complaints of harassment of human rights defenders. Such criminal acts could be prosecuted. Although the number of convictions secured for the sexual abuse of minors had risen since the Special Procedures for Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse Act had entered into force, there was probably still some underreporting of cases. The Domestic Violence Prevention Act was an attempt to address that problem, by requiring social workers, health workers and the police to report any cases. More training and awareness training was, however, needed by investigators, judges and prosecutors if modern standards were to prevail.

30. **Mr. Nelson** asked if the delegation could provide facts or figures on the outcome of prosecutions of human rights defenders over the past three to four years.

31. **Mr. Kotrane** said that he welcomed the introduction of a bill to prohibit the recruitment of children in armed conflicts. Did legislation in the State party apply extraterritorially so that acts committed abroad could be prosecuted? With regard to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and in the context of paragraph 21 of the list of issues in relation to the third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives (CRC/C/MDV/Q/4-5), there was no mention in the State party's report of any follow-up activities carried out in light of the Committee's concluding observations on the Optional Protocols. The Committee considered that subjecting a child to forced labour was equivalent to the sale of children. The State party was required to include such offences in its legislation. Did legislation in the State party provide for all of the offences featured in the Convention and the Optional Protocols, even though they were not actually being committed within the State party's territory? And was an extraterritoriality provision included for those offences? The Committee was concerned that children as young as 10 years of age could be prosecuted and would like to know if that was the case even when the child was the victim.

32. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she would like to hear more from the delegation on whether the helpline mentioned was truly accessible to all children in the State party, even in remote regions. Was any assistance provided to rehabilitate children who had been victims of offences such as sexual exploitation or to provide them with redress?

33. **The Chair** said that he would like to know more about the definition of a child in the legislation of the State party and what exceptions existed to that definition. Were any exceptions compatible with the Convention? On the issue of the age of child marriage and sexual consent, were there plans to raise the age? The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children had visited the State party in May 2013 at a time when international attention had been focused on the situation of children's rights in the Maldives because of a court case involving a 15-year old victim. A number of recommendations had been issued by the Special Representative, regarding for instance the importance of awareness-raising, the need to expedite the reform of the Maldivian Constitution in order to protect children from all forms of violence and the need for a high-level platform to foster cooperation between different government entities in order to address all forms of violence against children. To what extent would the Child Rights Bill help the State party to comply with those recommendations?

The meeting was suspended at 4.15 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

34. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that consultations with stakeholders were being held in order to submit the Maldives' reports on the Optional Protocols in the near future. It was important to note that the reporting obligation was a significant burden on small, developing nations such as the Maldives, as was the implementation of the recommendations submitted by the treaty bodies. On the issue on extraterritoriality, the Anti-Terrorism Act which had recently come into force, was applicable extraterritorially, as was the Criminal Code.

35. **Ms. Rishmee** (Maldives) said that the Thalassaemia Control Act 2010 had come into effect in 2012, helping to mainstream the treatment programme and facilitating the availability of medical treatment. Through the Act, thalassaemia screening services were offered outside Malé for the first time. There were a total of 86 health facilities providing blood transfusion services and 5 with blood storage systems. Thalassaemia screening was provided free of charge in seven health facilities. Abortion was permitted in the case of thalassaemia, sickle cell disease, multiple congenital anomalies or conditions threatening the life of the mother.

36. **Ms. Shafeea Riza** (Maldives) said that the proposed Child Rights Bill, which had been submitted to Parliament for approval, had a number of important features. It established a national child protection system, set up a specific department to deliver child protection services, created a national council to implement the bill, and introduced special enforcement mechanisms as well as checks and balances. The national council was an advisory body, composed of civil society, government ministries, the police and the judiciary, which was intended to foster coordination and exercise a regulatory function. Through the newly introduced enforcement mechanisms, the State was able to intervene to help children in need, in particular children experiencing neglect or violence. The Human Rights Commission of Maldives was granted a special monitoring role through the bill, and was also accountable to Parliament.

37. Turning to the question of the definition of a child, according to current legislation anyone under the age of 18 years was considered to be a child, while the minimum age for employment was set at 16. The Government had the discretion to dictate the terms and conditions of employment for 16-18 year olds. The minimum age for marriage was 18, however, in accordance with the Family Law Act, provided that

certain conditions were met and the courts were satisfied that an individual was financially and mentally capable of entering into marriage. With regards to prosecution of a child, criminal responsibility was to be set at a minimum age of 10 years, under the proposed Juvenile Justice Bill and Child Rights Bill. Children between 10 and 15 years of age could only be held criminally responsible for certain serious offences, while for those aged between 15 and 18 years the prosecution was required to prove that the accused had the necessary mental capability to carry out the offence. Regarding the specific case of the 15-year old girl sentenced for fornication, the judgment was overturned by the High Court, which set a precedent, meaning that a person who was a victim could not be prosecuted and would therefore not carry criminal responsibility for their actions.

38. Several laws had recently been enacted covering the offences provided for in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, including the offences of the sale of children, sexual exploitation, forced labour, child prostitution and child pornography. A national level steering committee, composed of all of the relevant government agencies, had been put in place and an action plan had been endorsed by that committee, to assess the implementation of the new legislation. The Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act introduced measures to provide for the seizure and confiscation of proceeds derived from the offences covered in the Optional Protocol. Recently approved legislation on extradition had the effect of making all of those offences extraditable and under the new Criminal Code extraterritorial jurisdiction was also applicable to those offences.

39. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that the Committee was concerned about the impact of climate change on the islands of Maldives given their low altitude and vulnerability. Were young people involved in efforts to raise awareness of that issue? In addition, in what cases was abortion permitted and were those cases explicitly stipulated in the legal framework?

40. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that Maldives would be one of the countries to experience the most serious effects of climate change. It had raised the issue of climate change internationally and children had always been involved in that task. There was a range of programmes in place for children and adolescents, to raise awareness and find solutions to combat the threat of climate change. There had been national exhibitions and conventions on climate change, with the participation of young people from across the country, and all schools had an environment club in which such issues were addressed. The media had also created programmes on the subject of climate change, aimed at children.

41. **Mr. Ashraf** (Maldives) said that there were two companies providing telecommunication services in the nation and that their services were available across the islands, even in the most remote areas. Children in all regions were therefore able to access the helpline. In addition, many children had their own mobile telephones, which further facilitated their access to the helpline. Child protection policies implemented in schools had also given children a range of options in terms of reporting cases of abuse. Many campaigns had been carried out nationally, including on television, to raise awareness of the helpline and to provide information about the service. With regard to revictimization, the Ministry of Law and Gender had put in place programmes to rehabilitate victims of sexual abuse with the objective of avoiding revictimization. In 2015 over 1,200 cases of child abuse were recorded, with around 30 per cent of the total relating to sexual abuse of children. The number of cases being reported was higher than in the past, as a result of the awareness-raising programmes that had been conducted. The Special Procedures for Perpetrators of

Child Sexual Abuse Act provided for the prosecution and imprisonment of anyone who failed to report child sexual abuse, which encouraged widespread reporting.

42. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the recommendations made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children had been incorporated into new legislation, including the new Child Rights Bill, which had been submitted to Parliament, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, Sexual Harassment and Abuse Prevention Act and Sexual Offences Act.

43. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that the country was under serious threat from the impact of climate change and asked what measures had been taken to educate children on those effects of climate change and the preventive action that needed to be taken. What was being done to protect the islands and safeguard children's future, particularly in the event of a tsunami?

44. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that since 2011 schools dedicated a certain number of days, on an annual basis, to disaster risk reduction awareness. Awareness-raising activities were carried out, comprising first aid sessions, construction workshops and management drills, with a view to increasing children's knowledge and resilience in the event of a natural disaster. Climate change education initiatives were also conducted in cooperation with the National Disaster Management Centre, the Maldives National Defence Force, the Maldivian Red Crescent, the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF. In 2015, emergency operation plans had been developed in all schools nationwide and assistance was provided by the State to each school to ensure their effective implementation.

45. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that climate change was incorporated into the school curriculum. Climate change activism in the State party had sprung from the education sector and school children led the main environmental campaigns, including in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with the support of the Ministry of Education. Since the 2004 tsunami, the Government had enacted disaster management and response legislation, strengthened the mandates of the disaster management authorities, and organized public workshops on preparedness and response in the event of a disaster.

46. **The Chair**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether reports were true of the withdrawal of creative and performing arts from some schools following pressure from certain religious groups which deemed it conflictual with Islam.

47. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that the parents of some children in certain schools had expressed their views concerning the teaching of performing arts but that all schools had the obligation to provide creative and performing arts as part of the national curriculum.

48. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the provision permitting abortion in cases of the rape of a child who was considered not physically and mentally fit to deliver applied also to girls and women with no mental health disorders.

49. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether victims of rape that did not constitute incest were also entitled to medical termination of pregnancy.

50. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that medical termination of pregnancy was allowed for thalassemia major, sickle cell major, multiple congenital anomalies and maternal life threatening conditions. It was also permitted within 120 days of conception for pregnancy as a result of rape by an immediate family member, rape of a child who was physically and mentally not fit to assume pregnancy and deliver, or under some specific circumstances, where the doctor believed that medical termination was required.

51. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** asked for data on the number of cases of medical abortion. She would also like details regarding education and care services for children under 3 years of age.

52. **Mr. Nelson** asked whether measures had been taken to quash views that equated the Convention with anti-Islamic concepts. He asked whether young people were free to follow a religion of their choosing. Could the delegation comment on reports of violence against individuals preaching religious tolerance?

53. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that there were no data available concerning terminations of pregnancy. The authorities, in cooperation with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, ensured dissemination of the Convention among the public and its compliance with sharia, hence the reservations to certain provisions. There had been no reports of attacks on children on religious grounds.

54. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that day care for children under 3 years was provided throughout the territory and reached 93 per cent of that age group. Nursery schools fell into two categories (one for children up to 30 months and another for those from 30 months to 3 years) and fostered social interaction.

55. **The Chair**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether the High Court ruling prohibiting the president from commuting the death penalty for murder to life imprisonment in cases where the heirs of the victim requested the application of the principle of Qisas (retaliation in kind) applied also to persons under the age of 18.

56. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that a final decision on the ruling in question was pending before the Supreme Court. However, as it stood, presidential pardons could be issued for any person facing the death penalty, except where the heirs of the victim requested the imposition of such a punishment.

57. **Mr. Nelson** thanked the delegation for the open and fruitful dialogue and expressed the hope that the measures outlined would be effectively implemented during the next reporting period with the assistance of the Committee.

58. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) expressed his thanks to the Committee for its willingness to listen to and engage with the State party. The Government relied on the Committee's support and would be guided by the concluding observations in the formulation of legislation and programmes to strengthen children's rights.

59. **The Chair** acknowledged the reporting burden on the State party and thanked it for its submission. The Committee was looking forward to the State party's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. The concluding observations would cover the death penalty, violence against children and climate change, all of which were serious issues. He encouraged the State party to accelerate implementation of new legislation, which could have a real impact on children's lives.

60. The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.